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``HOW CANADA CAN BREAK FROM THE U.S. EMPIRE``

Chairperson: I will be the chairman for this session, and I would like to welcome everyone to the second day of the Ontario Socialist Educational Conference. I would like to explain about the format for today: we will be having the main presentation and right after that a short period for some questions and discussion from the floor and then we will break down into 3 discussion groups. I will point out who the leaders are and you can assign yourself to one of them and you can have a discussion in more depth around some of the ideas that have come out today. I would like now to introduce today's speaker. His name is Ross Dowson, the Executive Secretary of the League for Socialist Action, and he is going to be speaking on ``How to break with the U.S. empire.``

Ross Dowson: Comrades and friends, I hope you have all looked at the literature list at the back and I hope you have seen, if you haven't already read it, a copy of ``Canada-U.S. Relations - *(a socialist viewpoint, ``Vanguard Pub. Toronto, 1969).* It's quite a key document I think. Some comrades may think it's a little dated, because I think the last document that is in it is a letter that appeared in 1969, two years ago, a rebuttal to an article by Robin Mathews on the question of the Americanization of Canadian universities, and that's the last contribution. The first contribution is from 1967. I glanced at this pamphlet as I was preparing this speech and I concluded that there was not too much to say that's new since we wrote that pamphlet, but I'm going to speak for an hour, anyway (*laughs from audience*).

Okay. In that pamphlet, we issued a call, particularly to the New Democratic Party, the organized expression of independent political action of the working people of this country - and we issued an appeal, a call to them to respond to the developing nationalist sentiment that is taking place across Canada. We identified ourselves with what we called ``Canadian nationalism`` and we tried to argue with persons who said that it was ``reactionary`` and ``pro-capitalist`` -- where was a great range (*of epithets*) - as a matter of fact that was what the pamphlet was composed of, a series of articles in which we sharpened our ideas in conflict, in the traditional Marxist way -- as you know most of the Marxist writings have been polemics with other writings and other views - and we sharpened our views on this question in polemics with a whole range of prominent Canadians - and that's what that pamphlet is composed of.

Now I want to start of my contribution on this question, of how can Canada break from the U.S. empire - a specific question. I wanted to start of by talking about Amchitka. What was Amchitka? Well we were all familiar if only from reading Labor Challenge, (*which reported in its Oct. 11, 1971 issue the spontaneous mass demonstrations of thousands of high school students, first in B.C. but then across English Canada and supported by several unions and the B.C. Federation of Labour, in reaction to US plans to detonate a nuclear device in the ocean off Alaska-ed.*) but most of us were probably involved in some way in the Amchitka actions, because they were big actions that took place across Canada just last month, and thinking back, I came to the conclusion that perhaps we have never really discussed

Amchitka, among ourselves, as revolutionaries and socialists, and labor militants. We haven't discussed Amchitka - what that was, what it really was. Some called it an "ecological protest" action you know, the bomb is going to go off there, down deep in the earth, it was going to disturb the fauna and the flora and these things they talk about you know, when they talk about ecology, it was going to disrupt various forms of life, and it's been called that, an ecological protest, and I think it was - certainly many persons in it thought that's why they protested. It was also called an "anti-Nixon" action. You know Nixon is the most hated -- considered by most people to be a most contemptible President. Maybe Kennedy was not bad, and maybe Johnson was not so good, but Nixon was considered to be a caricature as President of the world's greatest power -- you remember the sign "would you buy a second-hand car from this man," so some persons called it an "anti-Nixon" demonstration, and of course it had that in it too. The biggest and most popular sign in the Toronto demonstrations, and I think that was true of many parts of Canada, was "Blast Nixon, not the bomb." So it had a certain anti-Nixon character.

The meaning of the Amchitka demonstrations

Then, some called it a "pacifist" demonstration, and some of us called it an "anti-war" action. Well it was a big action. You'd have to say it was the biggest popular protest action I think that this country has ever seen. It wasn't a revolution - you're not going to compare it to the Winnipeg General Strike as a landmark in the history of class struggles in this country but certainly I think it was a significant action of gigantic proportions. More persons were involved in this action than any other action, which makes it extremely significant. It was very significant because it brought in whole new layers of the youth, mostly high schools - the most effective forces were high school students, and they came into a struggle that they'd never come into before. So it was certainly a significant action. Well, it was all that people said it was - what they say they were there for - it was that - you can't deny that people came for various reasons, and insofar as they came for their own reasons it had that character. It was an anti-Vietnam war action, there is no question about that, but **primarily** it was a Canadian nationalist demonstration. I don't think you can understand it, otherwise. I think that's what it was, that's what summarized it.

It was a massive national protest of people, mostly young people, in this country, who had a feeling that their country - that's what they thought, that's what was their level of understanding and experience - their country's security was being jeopardized, if not the whole world's but particularly their country, the shores of Canada were going to be ruined in some way, Canadian people's aspirations and wishes were being contemptuously brushed aside and ignored - this would make it justifiable in my opinion to call it a Canadian nationalist demonstration. What we raised as an important challenge in this pamphlet, now four or five years ago, has resulted, and I think in a very prophetic way, in the biggest action that has ever taken place in Canada - and it was a **nationalist** demonstration.

You have to say - I want to say a few words about the consciousness of the Canadian people at that action has revealed to us. There is no doubt that the United States is the most hated State in the world's history - there has never ever been a State that has been so hated by such a broad mass of the world's population as the American State, the U.S. State. And I am not talking about the people of the colonial world, you know, who have felt the guns, the bullets, the bombs that come from Washington, the U.S. State Department and the arsenals under its control - they certainly hate America and United States capitalism, and imperialism - they've led the struggle against it. It's the powerhouse they know, it's the powerhouse of world reaction, and they are laying their lives on the line in the struggle against it. What about the Canadian people, you know we're not colonials, what about the people in Europe? Well you would have to say that even in Europe and across the world in the so-called civilized sectors of the world, the advanced capitalist sectors of the world, who aren't feeling the guns and the bombs of the American State, they also hate America. This is the most common phenomenon. I used to get a laugh when I was in Europe last year. You'd never see a Canadian touring Europe without the Canadian insignia, they'd all carry the Canadian flag - they didn't want to be identified as Americans. That's true, every Canadian who goes to Europe -- you will see people who would never wear a Canadian flag, who would never think of it -- will wear a Canadian flag - this little symbol, so you always tell the Canadians when you get on any tourist bus - they're all marking themselves, they don't want to be thought to be Americans. And it's a reaction, a reaction to a fact, that America is hated across the world - not in the colonial world only, but in every sector of the world.



The attitude of Canadians toward the American State

The Canadian people hate the American State. They do. And I want to say a few words about the nature of this State. I want to talk about, is it anti-Americanism or is it anti-imperialism? I want to define that. Is it just anti-Americanism? In my opinion there is no such thing as anti-Americanism of any substance in Canada, in the thinking of the Canadian people, and I think it is important that we should talk about thinking of the Canadian people because we are involved in the struggle of the Canadian people, and have to know the dynamics of what their thought is, what the possible development of their thinking is. This is the big thing before the NDP. If the NDP doesn't move in here, it's missing the boat, missing its responsibilities. Why, it was missing the radicalization process, that's what we said in that pamphlet and I want to develop one aspect of that, what is the thinking of the Canadian people as regards to the United States.

Well, they hate American intervention in other people's affairs. You don't have to be very sophisticated, very political. All you have to do is turn on the TV occasionally, you'll see American Marines going in here, over the last ten years and over everyone of our spans of political life -- over the past five years, there have been many incursions of American military forces into other people's countries. You don't have to know anything about what's involved; what are they doing there, what right have they to be there, you know, in these nations, even the most reactionary states, what are these nations doing that justifies American forces going in there? You know, most people in Canada and the United States don't identify with the Vietnamese Revolution, such you and I do. They just think that America has no right to be in there, what's its business in there? A very simple, low-level reaction you might say, which has great potential of developing into a higher level of understanding. And so I think this is one of the big factors in the thinking of the Canadian people.

That the United States is interfering in other people's affairs. It's looting the natural resources in other countries - certainly everyone knows that in Canada - you pick up the press and you read (...) You know about two years ago one of the Ministers in the Ontario Tory government said people who are talking about Canadian national interests being jeopardized by American economic power were yahoos and economic illiterates - that's what he said. And about six months later the whole Tory government jumped on the bandwagon and talked about how we've got to do something to protect the Canadian economy against the power of the American capital - no, they don't use that term, pardon me (...) they talk about the power and the weight of the American economy and how they are taking over many of the corporations and of course it is common (*knowledge*) - I don't have the statistics at hand but many of you I'm sure can give us some statistics to show the power of American capitalism and its domination of the commanding heights of the Canadian economy, its control of some of the biggest sectors of (*Canada's*) natural resources.

Well, people know that. You may even have some idea that you or your son or daughter can grow up to be wealthy, maybe even become a millionaire, but then you read *Vertical Mosaic* (*John Porter, 1965, U.of T. Press, Toronto*) and you see that if you're not Anglo-Saxon you don't have a ghost of a chance, you know, if you're not Anglo-Saxon, white and - pardon? (*male from the audience*) and male, yes, you haven't got a single chance, at any rate, and now you know, that even if you have all **that**, you can be male, and you can be white and you can be from Scottish origin - I think that's one of the component parts of being a success in Canada - you still haven't got a chance because the Americans are in there - big American corporate power. So this sets up certain feelings, you see; if you have illusions even about the possibilities for Canadians, you soon find out that the Canadians don't even have a chance, as such.

They're against the international diplomacy of the Americans, aside from its bombs, you know, the arrogance and contempt that the American diplomatic service has for everybody else, you know, they speak from power and they speak in the most gauche and crude way, you know. I'm not talking about that woman, Mitchell who is quite notorious about speaking off the cuff, but just generally, this is the way American diplomats operate, they operate with contempt and arrogance for everybody else and other representatives, including our diplomats, you see. Our diplomats, even Mr. Trudeau, isn't met with respect, with proper understanding; we have to go humble ourselves to them, you see.

Then of course the Canadian people know about the waste and inefficiency of its productive processes. You know we get American toasters and they don't pop up when you expect them to pop up - they have built-in obsolescence in them, you know. Most of the goods we use are American-produced goods, and so, there is also a contempt which sometimes takes on violent forms - when you buy a car and spend a lot of money you get a piece of tin that doesn't stand up to the salt on the road, and you say look at this productive mess that's here - it's terrible, an insult to human intelligence -- a

waste of natural resources. Everybody knows about those beautiful books that are sold in the bookstores by some California conservation organization down there, the Sierra Club, and they show the waste of the beautiful natural resources of America - most people know this.

And they know about its racism, and we know about its sexism. Canadians are reserved, their advertisements are reserved, compared to American sexism, the most blatant manipulation of sex, both male and female in all advertising - it permeates everything. We know about its tensions, we read about the stories, where you can't walk down the streets of New York. Our American comrades will tell you that, you know. Comrades don't carry any money with them. You have to carry some money, you see, so you can give it up and don't get your throat cut (*laughs*). If you don't have any money, they know you're hiding it, you see (*laughs*). And who are these "people" -- just ordinary Americans. American Blacks who are frustrated and under terrible living conditions (...) try to get at the system by getting at you, at some individual person. So we all know about that - the shocking gaps in living standards.

Canadians identify with the American people

People don't know the why of all that. They don't know why it is so, but they know it. They know that situation. But they identify with the American people, in general I think. I think we have to say that the Canadian people identify with the American people. I don't see any substantial anti-Americanism as such - that's the big contradiction. You see, in Canada, while Canada is a nation-state and as a matter of fact it has embedded in it some other states - it has Quebec within in, not established yet, but another nation - while Canada is a nation-state there is no Canadian culture of any substance apart from Quebec culture and the Native culture which is pushed back and almost destroyed, temporarily flourishing in Eskimo art under the auspices of Ottawa - but generally the people of this country do not have any concept of a culture of their own. We're Americans, as a matter of fact, we call ourselves "Americans." Sometimes we object to being called Americans but we're inhabitants of the North American continent and there is such a thing as the American culture. It happens to be the culture of world capitalism - international capitalism. But we don't have any culture of our own. And so we identify with the American people. We all know American people, not just our radical co-thinkers but of course there are a very high proportion of Americans in Canada, just recent Americans who protested against this system of America, who came to Canada. There are all kinds of them here, some of them in this room, who came here. We know them. We know them well, they are part of us, we identify with them, we have a certain sympathy with them even more so because many of them left an area of persecution and we feel some identity because we agree with those who are there.

So I think there are 70,000 draft evaders in Canada, if I am not mistaken. That's seventy thousand, a tremendous number of persons in a country of only 20 million odd persons, and then you think about the many others who come to Canada. You know Canada is becoming more and more a place of refuge. These draftees they just come up here and say there is no tension in Canada - they don't talk about Quebec of course, they're talking about Vancouver (*laughs*), and Toronto. You have to say there is no tension in this country, of a sharp character. So we identify with Americans generally. We Canadians - I'm being spokesman of the general level - we Canadians hate the American **system**, even if in general we don't know what that system is, they hate the system. I think that is the general change now among Canadians, that America is a total thing - I don't know the hip phrase for it - it's the whole bag, you know, it's the total picture - people hate that, in Canada. That's what they hate; they don't hate the American people.

There's a certain theory that we're going the same way. I was talking to an American - a voluntary exile, just last week, a fairly well-to-do person - and this person came up to Canada because they thought Canada was a better place to live. And they told me about how much better it was, and I had to say, yes, it's true - why should I say otherwise - it's ridiculous for me to say that Canada is the same as the United States, it isn't. Toronto isn't the same as New York. I didn't feel any great national pride, of course, I tried to explain that phenomena to that person. But then that person went on to say "I'm afraid Canada is going the same way" and I said yes, that's the way Canada is going. So we know generally that there is a consensus that it's the system that is terrible in America, whatever it is called, and one of the fears is that Canada is going the same way.

American domination of the Canadian economy

How to stop the process? - that's the question. How to stop the process - that's what gives the fillip, the cohesion, to what I call Canadian nationalism. Of course there is the data now which we have which we more or less knew about some years ago but is now common change about what are the facts that (*show that*) the Canadian economy is dominated - the heights of the Canadian economy are dominated and controlled by American capitalism. And everyone has talked about how to stop it. You know the Canadian government has been mincing around question of what to do; they've talked about screening some of these investments, etc., but everybody's involved in that now, so you have to (*ask*) what does that reflect? That reflects the fact that the Canadian government recognizes this profound nationwide concern, of all levels of society - this nationwide concern, this national consciousness that exists in Canada. (...) how to stop this process taking place in Canada.

What forces are available or potentially able to stop it? That's the question. Well, Amchitka, in my opinion, showed that there are powerful forces that are concerned about it, very, very powerful forces. And they came out around a specific incident which they saw was a shocking and dangerous thing for the future of mankind and for Canada, and they took to the streets. So we have a powerful movement, a movement of people who can be mobilized on the streets, which we have to call "nationalist."

Now, I would like to say a few words about the role of the various forces in this. I would say first though, before I go into that, that this Canadian nationalism is progressive. Very progressive, and it is progressive right through - right through, it's essential character. Just as I'd say Québécois nationalism is progressive and revolutionary, and right through. And Black nationalism is progressive, Chicano nationalism is progressive and right through. That's not to identify with them because I'd say of course the Canadian people have a State and political parties, and they presumably - constitutionally - electorally, have control over the State. For these other nations, their nationalism flows from their not having State power, aside from their inferior position which is sustained by their absence of enjoying State power.

Now that doesn't mean of course that reactionaries don't try to grab onto it. Of course, how can it be otherwise. What is politics? We're politicians - every person is a politician whether they know it or not - we're all in politics. If you're "neutral" you're in it because your neutrality favours the main thrust of the major political power - but everybody's in politics. And of course it's a struggle. That's what it is all about, a struggle for the human mind. You know the bourgeoisie know man makes history. The Marxists say man makes history and the bourgeoisie know it too, they know that - and so that's what politics is about - the struggle for the human mind, for human power, for our arms and our strength - through our brains, that's how they get us. You know, the workers in this country accept capitalism because they've been conditioned to accept it and they don't see any other alternative. They've been alienated from other projected alternatives - since the October Revolution the light has got dim with Stalinism, and the bourgeoisie made sure the workers knew all about all the crimes of Stalinism, and added a few more to boot, and alienated workers from any idea that we can do anything substantially different in the direction of socialism. A whole generation, a new generation is investigating this now, of course

Contending forces in shaping Canadian nationalism

I tried to describe the real process, the real thinking, of the Canadian people, and how all the various political contending forces are getting into this struggle. For instance, we moved into it - Amchitka - and we tried to make it an anti-war demonstration. We didn't deny its other character, but we tried to make it an anti-war demonstration - we said "Stop Amchitka, stop the War." Then we also tried to make it an attack against Canada's involvement, Canada's complicity in this world-wide conspiracy the US State Department has organized, around NATO and NORAD - so we tried to say "End Canadian complicity, break from NATO and NORAD" -- so we tried to make it an anti-war demonstration, we intervened in it. Well the others didn't intervene in the Amchitka action - that's rather significant, that the bourgeoisie didn't intervene in it. Rather significant that they didn't - they were outside of the nationalist struggle, which is a lesson in itself, which I will say something about. But reactionary forces tried to latch onto the nationalist movement, nationalist sentiment; they've even tried to shape it, to give it a character in a couple of places.

But should we let these forces and their intervention and their attempt to shape it and give it some kind of ideological expression, characterize this movement for us? Well you know you would never identify with any radical protest, you

know, because with every radical protest, there is an attempt to co-opt them, by the bourgeoisie, an attempt to divert it, to absorb it, to siphon it off. They intervene, they're not going to stand aside, and there is the attempt of the revolutionaries to intervene, and take it forward, and sharpen it's consciousness, and pull all the orders of protest together.

Well, in my opinion, the intervention of bourgeois forces, Canadian bourgeois forces in the nationalist sentiment of the Canadian people has been a complete failure - so patently false. For instance, the committee that was set up by Donald Gordon and Claude Ryan and McLellan - the Committee for an Independent Canada, I think that's what it is called. This committee has had about a year and a half life, and I just happened to glance through an article written some while ago, on what some of them said, why the committee was necessary - it was rather interesting, to see what they hoped to do. Claude Ryan, editor of *(the Montreal daily) Le Devoir*, he said he supports the Committee for an Independent Canada - he wanted to structure this body and he went on tours across Canada since last Spring. He said he hoped the committee would be a rational alternative to Quebec separatism - that's what he was involved in it for, he said the federalists in Quebec have to do something, they can't sit around all the time answering their opponents - they must do something constructive. So that's what he wants. He wants to divert, to give us a new tool to take the heat off the Canadian ruling class with regards to the separatist aspirations of the Québécois. So it's a ploy, it's very frank - that's all it is, a diversion - very frank.

And of course Donald Gordon has said a few words why he supports the committee - he's been very frank, also. And he has been exposed, also, by the U.A.W. *(the U.S.-based autoworkers' union, predecessor to the C.A.W.-ed.)* But he made a couple of statements on why he supports the committee. One of them was that he's opposed to the Canadian - U.S. union connection, he says very frankly. He wants to intervene in this situation, and beat the drums for the Canadian workers to break from their connection with American workers. That's a position, you know, a valid position - you can understand his purpose - he speaks as a bourgeois, very frankly a bourgeois - he doesn't like the Canadian-U.S. union connection, and he wants to divert this nationalist sentiment in Canada to rupture that, which is very valuable to the Canadian working class -- that connection. He's against wage parity. You know, there's a big struggle in the Canadian labor movement - has been for some years now - to establish equal wages by Canadian workers with American workers, many times in the same trade under the same contract. Isn't it outrageous that workers in Canada who work for GM or work for Douglas or other corporations don't get the same wage as workers in the United States? They need more, you know because all the rules of logic say they need more, because the cost of living is higher in Canada than it is in the United States. By all account, the cost of living is higher yet they get higher wages in the U.S. Here we are -- why shouldn't we get the same wage? So this pressure is an important pressure, and all the more that the workers are organized in the same unions. I'm a brother of a brother down there in Long Beach, you see, in the same union, I'm paying probably the same dues, we're united you know - the banner in the union hall, with the banner "United together we will all go forward" -- you know, all the slogans of the labor movement, and yet we don't get the same wages. So, there's a powerful pressure on the union brass in America to also negotiate for parity wages for the Canadian workers. But Mr. Gordon has a few words to say about that too, intervening in this process which I have been talking about.

He said of course that's a plot, this parity wage stuff, by the union brass, of the United States - you see, they want parity. That will come as news, to workers in the UAW and other international unions, that the union brass in the United States want Canadian workers to have wage parity with the American workers. And they do, according to Mr. Gordon, no matter what you think and your experience tells you, they're fighters for it, they're anxious to win it for the Canadian workers, because they want to cripple the Canadian economy. They want to deprive the Canadian capitalist class - he doesn't call them that, of course - Canadian industrialists of the privilege, of the benefit they have of lower wages so we can move out into the markets, you see, and of course, so Canada, and the of course Canadian workers in the interests of the nation should give up wage parity, or even what wages they've got, they should take a few cuts probably, to allow Canadian trade to blossom and cut American-produced goods out of the market. So he's pitting the workers against one another, too, you see, in the interests of nationalism.

Well, so there's this movement they've organized. They had a conference last week. There was a report in Labor Challenge - I don't want to go too much into it; but it is obvious that it isn't going anywhere, really. There were a few statements made of the crisis among themselves, but I think it is most obvious that all the moves of the Canadian bourgeois - petty-bourgeois - to fasten onto the Canadian nationalist sentiment that has been developing in this country have failed. They're piddling - their proposals are piddling and an insult to anybody who knows the magnitude of the problem, particularly in the economics. The Canadian government is going to screen - screen out and pick out where

they're going to allow American capital investment to come in, as if American capitalists are going to come up and ask them, as if the freebooters of American capitalism are going to announce their attendance, their participation in the looting of this country. You know, there is nothing more fluid than capital, and there is *(no way)* you can stop the influx of capital anywhere it wants to go. You can put in a few little strings and inhibitions but nothing is going to stop it. They have thousands of ways of getting around it, and if they haven't got ways of getting around it now they get them embedded in legislation - that's what the various parties do, you know, that's the function of some of the bourgeois parties, to reflect the interest of certain elements in the capitalist class to get them privileges.

The progressive nature of Canadian nationalism

So I think Canadian that nationalism is progressive The only force that identifies with it is the radical force, effectively. The bourgeoisie don't have any real hopes of doing anything with it. They show that they are lock, stock and barrel tied completely with the American State Department. They have no alternatives - they know that, and they say that as a matter of fact. I did have a clipping here ... *(Liberal Minister)* Benson made a statement "What's good for the U.S. is good for Canada." He made this statement recently just after the settlement of the monetary crisis. "Whatever is good for the United States is good for Canada." And Mr. Trudeau came back with a promise, which he tried to make out was a victory, a tremendous victory, when he went down and met Mr. Nixon in his office and he told Mr. Nixon what was necessary to be done, and Mr. Nixon said well, you know, we'll take into account some of the interests of the Canadian economy - that's about all that he said, and *(Mr. Trudeau)* came back and said "great victory." Well of course, Mr. Nixon is going to take it into account and always did take it into account, you know - the American bourgeoisie are not fools, they're interested in maintaining a working relation with the Canadian capitalist class - sometime just wipe them out, you know, certain sectors, absorb some of them - but they have a working relationship with the Canadian capitalist class, because of the world political situation.

Now if someone could point out about Amchita - I'm just going back to Amchitka again - that the Canadian flag was raised at Amchita, at the demonstrations. It was shown in the press. The kids sang "O Canada." Well, did that show that it was reactionary? That it's not progressive? I don't think so. What did we think the young high school students would sing, "The Red Flag"? *(laughs)* I don't know what we anticipated, what did we think they would sing? The "International"? They took what was at hand; here they saw what was happening - Canada's security is being jeopardized by the bomb blast, the interests of the Canadian economy and Canadian society are being ignored in the most blatant and arrogant way by the American State Department, so you grab what there is, and so they sang "O Canada" and they raised the Canadian flag. Now of course we heard at the Plenum of the YS *(Young Socialists, youth group in solidarity with the LSA-ed.)* the other day that when some of them raised the Canadian flag - it happened to be the Maoists who raised it, I gather, but I don't think we should be hesitant to say that in many cases the flag wasn't raised by Maoists -- I think it was raised by young high school students who have the greatest possibilities of becoming revolutionaries, and they grabbed what there was, what was at hand, and they expressed their feeling with what was available.

Well, the Maoists raised *(the Canadian flag)* in Ottawa from what we heard, but of course it didn't go over with the Québécois, because in Quebec they know what that Canadian flag is; *(they)* know what the Canadian flag is. A lot of the high school youth don't know what it is - as a matter of fact, the Canadian flag was a concession to Canadian nationalist sentiment, that's what it was about. That's what it came to be, you know - we had the Red Ensign for years. It was good enough for our grandfathers, and it was good enough for us, for many, many years. And then suddenly the Canadian government turned a new face, wanted to present a new face, and gave us a new flag. And that was a concession. Some years ago, that sentiment which they knew was there and substantial --- mainly, it was a concession to Quebec, but it was much, much too late. Quebec wasn't picking up a Canadian flag, it was picking up a Quebec flag - that's what they wanted. That flag came along maybe ten years too late for Quebec. But the Canadian youth said, well, that's the Canadian flag. They don't know, they don't think - a good number of them -- that that's the flag of the oppression of the Québécois. They're not too aware of that. They're becoming aware of it, but that's a process and an experience, so they picked up this flag. And they don't know like the West Indian Blacks do, that that's the flag of Canadian imperialism.

You see, if you start to characterize the demonstration and start to think about protesting about that, and say that's of some significance, you're substituting your own knowledge and your own consciousness for the present level and experience of the broad layer of new youth who are coming onto the political arena. And if I was on that demonstration

at the bridge, or wherever they were where they raised the flag, I don't think I could sing ``O Canada`` (*laughs*) but I don't think I would start to raise hell with it and start to tell them all off. I'd go to some of the leaders, some of the better elements, some of the more sophisticated and tell them ``you know, that's not a very good song, (*laughs*) you know what it means,`` etcetera. I don't think I'd go and tear down the Canadian flag - I don't think it would be understood by those young people. They wouldn't comprehend it - we'd have to go through some experiences. I think you'd be absolutely wrong - you couldn't be more wrong - if you characterized those demonstration on the basis they raised that flag of Canadian imperialism, that flag of the oppression of the Québécois nation and the oppression of the West Indians and the Brazilian people by our Canadian imperialists. You couldn't be more wrong.

Only the Canadian Trotskyists intervened in Amchitka

What was interesting, was that there was only one current that moved into that action, on the left - and that was us, the League for Socialist Action and the Young Socialists, LSA/LSO and YS/LJS (*LSA/YS - Ligue Socialiste Ouvrière/Ligue des Jeunes Socialistes*) - the only organizations that moved in, in those demonstrations, and tried to grasp them, that had some feeling for them. I don't think we moved in the best possible way, but we were the only ones that moved, and showed thereby our superior understanding. For instance, Waffle (*a large left nationalist current in the NDP-ed.*) just missed the whole boat, for what I understand, everywhere. They didn't understand it at all - didn't know what it was. And they were the ones who were the first to respond in the NDP, towards this nationalist sentiment. They were the first ones, and we'll talk about that problem a little later, but they missed the boat. Only we moved into this situation.

Now, we tried to play some role in it, you see. We tried to project -- tried to relate it to the war. It so happened that a few days (earlier) we had already projected a date. It was rather easy for us - we might not have moved in so easily if it hadn't been so. I'm just wondering what would have happened if the involvement of the revolutionary socialists, the militants who understand the nature of Canadian imperialism's complicity in the war in Vietnam, what they would have done in the Amchitka protests if it wasn't that they had already assigned, in boxing those dates - they just happened to come at the same time. It was no problem for us because we were already sort of getting ready for action. But I'm not too sure that in many parts of the country that the revolutionary socialists would have mobilized around Amchitka in time, and would have really moved into it. As it was, we did. Well I am suggesting we were favored by the fact that we were already moving into action around Vietnam - the International Days of Protest - they came at the same time.

But we moved in. And we tried to deepen them. We said ``yes, this is good, we're with it,`` and we tried to deepen it. I hope we didn't tear the flags down and alienate a lot of young people needlessly. I hope we sold the Young Socialist and approached them better, and didn't give anyone hell for singing ``O Canada.`` We intervened and said ``Yes - stop Amchitka, stop the war.``

And even here, I think we didn't do too well - I think sometimes it's good to be self-critical; I thought that at a couple of the demonstrations, we didn't make the linkage too well. It sort of caught us by surprise - I thought in Labor Challenge the linkage wasn't too complete. There was an attempt, you know, to relate the war to the Amchitka blast -- obviously there was Nixon, you know, an obvious relation - I didn't think it was too subtle, and I thought also that at a couple of meetings - the ones I attended -- we were a little off the beam when we attacked Trudeau for not protesting the Amchitka blast. It so happened he did, now of course it was ironical how feeble it was. There was an interesting article in the (*Toronto*) Star from a Vancouver correspondent. He talked about how the youth in Vancouver went into the street - they knew what to do. They knew exactly what to do and the government in Ottawa was fumbling for about a month - didn't know what to do and finally made the protest. Okay, so finally made the protest. It made the protest, and (*NDP leader*) Mr. Lewis and others congratulated the Canadian government for its protest.

Well, we could have said the protest was feeble - you could make all kinds of criticism -- it was late, but nonetheless the protest was there, and I think we may have missed the boat when we hammered the protest, the failure, the weak, slow protest of the Trudeau government. The real line we took, correctly I think -- we recouped ourselves - the real line was, we raised Canadian complicity around NATO and NORAD because that's where the blasts were involved - they were part of the NATO-NORAD alliance, which Canada's up to its neck in -- this counter-revolutionary military alliance. So we projected this: ``Stop the blast, Stop the war, End Canadian complicity, Break from NATO and NORAD.`` I think that was the best way it could have gone. And we generally carried that line.

Left-nationalist Waffle missed the boat

Now, I'd just like to say a few words about the Waffle's failure. Well, it seems to me that Waffle's failure was typified by the Toronto meeting, the Amchitka meeting. Mel Watkins came down, which was very good of course, that the leading spokesman of Waffle came down and addressed the meeting. But his speech was a surprising speech. Almost as surprising was the speech which was made during the provincial election by Penner - Steve Penner of Davenport (*NDP*) riding, before the VMC (*Vietnam Mobilization Committee*). There, you will recall - some of you were there - the VMC called this meeting at the time of the election, and gave an opportunity to the NDP to identify and link up the election campaign with the VMC in the most graceful way. You know, we've felt always when we were on a campaign to identify ourselves with the big ongoing radicalization issues even when there didn't seem to be much of a possibility of doing it very gracefully - it being seemed by many people of being dragged in by the teeth - when I've spoken when I was running for Mayor (*of Toronto*) on some of these issues, it seemed somewhat artificial but we did it anyway because it was our responsibility to use the public platform to talk about the struggles of other peoples and other lands and to identify ourselves with the overriding issues and not get mucked up in the smaller class issues on the municipal plane alone. But at that meeting, Penner failed completely to identify himself with the VMC. As a matter of fact, he attacked the main demands of the VMC, and ironically one of the leaders of the CP (*Canadian Communist Party*) who was also running (*as a candidate*) and who spoke from the platform made what I thought was quite a fine speech - at that time, they've changed their line since then, but at that time he made a fine speech completely identifying himself with the major demands of the Vietnam Mobilization Committee - ``end Canadian complicity,`` etc., and he explained to Mr. Penner the logic of the mass-action movement. He explained our strategy from this platform, he explained it quite well, and told Penner ``you know, there's no use talking about ultimate objectives in the most abstract way; you've got to link up with the ongoing developments of things and you've got to deepen them.`` It was a rather good speech, I thought, and Penner was revealed as a sectarian.

Well, Watkins was revealed as a sectarian too at City Hall Square. What he said was true, you know - he came out for Canadian socialism.. He said we have to have a socialist Canada. As a matter of fact, I was going to tell you there can't be any independent Canada without it being a socialist Canada. But I'm going to approach it - Watkins just threw it out, he just threw it out at the Amchitka demonstration, and he just blanketly challenged everybody to bring socialism to Canada. What's wrong, it seems to me, with the Waffle leadership - we know Waffle is a very diverse and complex movement, in the NDP, and it's the Left we are completely identified with, and it's the leadership, it seems to me, that doesn't have any concept of ``transitional demands`` or democratic demands, that are capable of mobilizing anybody in an intelligent way. They just counter-pose: you have to have a socialist Canada - that's all, in the most mechanical way. Well that's what Watkins said at City Hall and I would say that is the explanation of his failure to link in any way with the Amchitka demonstration - he didn't link with it at all - and so across Canada, I understand.

It is sectarianism, a lack of understand of how to develop a meaningful program of how to mobilize people, whereas we went into it. We recognized the movement as it was, we accepted as it was, we identified ourselves with it as it was, and we tried to deepen it and take it forward. We didn't know exactly how to relate to it at first, but we came through. It was also understandable that we didn't know how to relate to it too well, because it was the first big action. Revolutionists make all kinds of mistakes in first actions, even those revolutionists who achieved power later, like Lenin and Trotsky made all kinds of mistakes from 1905 and before. They were trying to come to grips with the problems, and trying to understand them. So, that was part of our experience, and I hope becomes embedded in the experience of revolutionary socialists, and how we moved into Amchitka, and we didn't hesitate - it was just good luck that we were having the International Days of Protest that allowed us to move in more effectively - good, but now we know that there is a powerful nationalist sentiment in this country that is capable of going onto the streets, and we have to be aware of that and be ready to identify with it and try to join it on the streets - try to mobilize it.

So it's a lesson, it seems to me, in the radicalization process of the Canadian people. It's a part of the whole radicalization process. We're pretty well clued into Women's Liberation, we're pretty well clued in to the Vietnam anti-war movement, but here is another one, that encompasses them all in many ways, weaves them all together to some degree. And I think I can say what we say about these other radicalization processes. It's been said from this platform that the women's liberation struggle, the abortion (*rights*) campaign, have a revolutionary dynamic. Well - some people would challenge it, you know - they say the demand is only to remove the law, the restrictions against the right of

women to choose - a very important right, but how do you socialize it, how do you radicalize it? - that's the challenge before us - the challenge before us in the mass movement generally - before radicals. Radicals have to be in the mass movement and they have to find ways of how to radicalize it - how to socialize it. Well, if you're not in it, you can never socialize it, of course, you can't even make the first move.

Our role in radicalizing Canadian nationalism

Some people characterize it and say it isn't socialist, and therefore we're not going to have anything to do with it. It's petty-bourgeois, reformist, whatever you will - a passing thing. They have this concept and they don't participate in it. Well we think it has a radical potential - it can be socialized, so we can participate in it. And I think with the Amchitka (*protests*) we did that, we radicalized it, we took it against the war in Vietnam, and we tried to make it also against Canadian complicity, and against the alliances of the Canadian government and that wealth and power of our people being manipulated and used for destructive war purposes - at any rate, the need to break from NATO and NORAD.

So, we're for radicalizing the whole process. I think all those things have what we said. They have the capacity to be socialized. They have this dynamic. Our responsibility is to participate in it, so we don't talk about that outside of ourselves, although we can talk about phenomena outside of ourselves. As scientists, social scientists, we have to say that phenomena is there - it's there - we didn't invent it. The women's liberation movement - we didn't create it, we didn't do anything about it except perhaps structure it, but it was there. For instance, the other day (...) I saw an item you've all read, it appeared two days ago - on the number of women now in the workforce in this country. And as Marxists you know we think this is a big factor in the radicalization of women. If women go into industry, become workers - we know they're going to become radical - well, that's what's been happening, of course. The latest data show the process of this deepening, and going on, more and more - so it is inevitable that women are going to become radicalized - it's inevitable - there's nothing going to stop it. Just by the fact that it is going to break them out of the family.

The capitalist system is at work, and its radicalizing (*these movements*.) You know, Marx explains that in the Communist Manifesto and Engels explains it a little more brilliantly in Socialism: Utopian and Scientific. He explains how the socialists analyze the situation as it is now, and try to find the contradictions in the system, and find what contradictions favour the radicalization process, and we link ourselves with those forces. You know, Marx didn't attribute any idealist or romantic concept to the workers' class, he didn't say the working class are morally better than the petty-bourgeois or anything like that - he said those workers are at the key point of production and by their relationship to the means of production, they're compelled to be radical.

They're compelled to be radical. I don't remember the exact paragraph, but there's one paragraph where he explains how they overcome all their divisions. You know, the workers are atomized a thousand ways, along sex lines, along language, along culture, a thousand ways - but Marx said that in the productive process, on the job, they overcome those phenomena and they become united. They learn the certain basic laws of unity, to protect themselves. It doesn't come from any radicals coming into the shop and doing it. If radicals could do it, they would have done it long ago, but there has to be an objective situation favourable to do it - and the overall objective situation is favorable, and we look to the workers to effect a change not just because we're workers, but because the workers are the revolutionary class by the mere fact of their relation to the means of production - they're the revolutionary class.

Okay, so we looked at the statistics - if you were out of touch with the reality in life - you have to say women are going to be radicalized. As a matter of fact, I thought the New Years social last year should (*have been*) dedicated to the rise of women's militancy in Canada. I think everyone has seen the tremendous heightening of revolutionary developments among the women of this country, by the mere fact -not because some of us moved in and started campaigned around it, although that's important as the conscious factor is in there now, but by the mere fact that women are moving into industry and they're breaking from the family, and they're starting to think about themselves as human beings, and their rights.

So we're in for that, so likewise. That's what makes those (*movements*) all radical - all those actions - all those phenomena are radical. That's why we have to say this nationalist sentiment in Canada - the cross-Canada nationalist sentiment is radical - it has that potential. It's outside of our participation. It's radical . With our participation it can

become socialized - that's the importance of our participation in it. We move into it, identify ourselves with the main thrust of it, and then we start to give those persons involved in those actions our knowledge, our experience which we have accumulated through our history, through our theories, which we are continually testing, and refining and adjusting and adapting, and we participate in that action to give it a revolutionary character.

That's what the revolution is all about - people come to us and say, this is that, this movement's not really that -- we will ask them what are they going to do, then? What projection have they got? Do they want to hold a study class to discuss Capital? We're not opposed to that, you know - (*but*) Marx was a man of action, also. He himself wrote Capital in a period of lull, in a period when he couldn't participate in the real class struggle, when there was an ebb in the class struggle. Fortunately what he wrote deepens our understanding of the whole picture. But we are people of action - that's the essential character of the socialist movement - a movement of action. And it wants to involve itself in the real processes of the class struggle - of **all** struggles, of **all** protests.

(...) There's that famous slogan of Debs (*Eugene V. Debs, a leader of the U.S. Socialist Party 1900-1926 and the most popular radical speaker of the period*), you know, where Debs identified himself with everything, all the protests and injustices that take place in capitalist society (*a reference to Debs' prison creed: "While there is a lower class I am in it; While there is a criminal element I am of it; While there is a soul in prison I am not free"--ed.*) Well, that's us - we'd identify ourselves with them all. We're trying to deepen them and give them a socialist consciousness, and we're trying to fuse them. Now they're being best fused in the revolutionary vanguard party - it can't encompass them all, but best fused by the leaders of these movements, the most dedicated, the most committed activists in these movements, to come to the revolutionary vanguard party, to the League - the League for Socialist Action and to the youth field, the Young Socialists - (*to*) co-ordinate those actions - that's how they're going to become socialized.

They're now infused with a great potential - a great dynamism. And they're now, with our participation and our awareness of their possibilities, (*going*) to become part of the whole socializing process. Don't we have to socialize all these people? How are we going to bring the socialist revolution to this country? Isn't it the action of the masses? It can only be an action of the mass. This revolution which is going to be so profound is going to strike at the very roots of all society and upend it all, and re-structure a totally new society that will have to involve everybody - or nearly everybody - it certainly does, it will have to neutralize what it doesn't win - that's what it has to do. It goes out to win the overwhelming majority, and how can it win them? Well, the party's going to win the vanguard elements, the best elements, the leaders of these elements.

That's just the objective, to co-ordinate these struggles, to give them direction and deepen them so that they can move forward and deal the final and ultimate blow to capitalism. But these movements are necessary in order to mobilize the masses forward, to engineer them into action against capitalism, because this capitalism system is not going to go down without the mobilization of the masses of this country. And one of the big factors now in this country - Amchitka tells us - are the national aspirations, the national discontent of the people of this country.

Thank you.

Excerpts from the Question & Answer period

Ross Dowson: There are some good questions for discussion. Let me say a few words

(...) Yes, there is an English Canadian nation. I thought I said that in my talk. (*There isn't*) a high sense of national identity, but there it is. You (*asked about*) English Canada. Well, there's a Canadian nation-state separate and apart from Quebec. There is such a thing as a national consciousness among the people who inhabit this northern part of North America outside of Quebec. There is a certain elementary national consciousness - that's what Amchitka showed - so I certainly think there is such a phenomenon. I think that people think of themselves as Canadians. I think it's certainly not a national identity in the sense that the Québécois have it, because of the language - there is language oppression, there is cultural oppression. I think there's the other aspect - I tried to deal with that in my talk - the other aspect of this Canadian nationalism, makes it not anti-American working class, which is very important, in my opinion, because we can't break from the - what is it the exact phrase? - the American military machine without the aid of the American

working class - that's what's good about it, we can't effectively break from it without the aid of this powerful working class in the United States, of which we are an integral part - tied to in many ways. They are a component part of the struggle against the American empire.

Canada is not a colony

Well, I could answer this (*second question*) -- we have never held the view that Canada was a colony. I know that this question was raised quite persistently at one of Mandel's speeches (*Ernest Mandel, internationally-known Marxist economist and author, leader of the Fourth International until his death in 1995 -ed.*) He replied, and we replied to it many times in our paper - as a matter of fact in our March or so issue there are two major articles together. There was a speech I gave in Saskatoon at the University during a tour I made on Canadian nationalism, and another article, (*published*) side-by-side on Canada's role in the West Indies. I forget the exact headline, the essence of it was, that "Canada is an imperialist and imperialized nation." We didn't use the terms Comrade Mandel had used. (...) We said that Canada is not a colony. Canada is an advanced capitalist imperialist country. At the same time as it is an exploiter of other peoples in the West Indies, it's also exploited itself (...) So it's not a colony in any meaning of the word. When people raise the question of (*Canada being*) a colony, the main thing is what they mean by it. You see, how they see the nature of the struggle. For instance some persons in Waffle - they insist in calling Canada a colony, but I don't think it means too much, and we shouldn't get caught up in some terminological debate. I'd like to ask them "what do they mean?" (...)

(...) When all the people in Waffle that I've heard use the term "colony" (*to describe Canada*) it doesn't seem to have any consequence to their program, because they say the task in Canada is for a Canadian socialist revolution - (*they say*) "we need a socialist Canada" - they say the same thing we do. They don't have a "transitional program." So I don't think it means anything in their mouths (*such as popular frontism - ed.*) (...) I think they just want to express (*their*) hatred of the situation. Of course, we are colonized - if you wanted to use that word, I wouldn't object to it, but Canada is a developed capitalist country.

We think the main thing to be said about that, a little different from what Comrade Mandel said - I think it is more or less what Lenin said. I seem to recall a while ago reading a statement by Lenin along the same vein. Here's what I think he would have said: "Canada is an advanced capitalist country. The working class - society - is organized and structured along class lines. There is a developed proletarian movement - this proletarian movement is in combat against their own capitalist class." I think that is true in Canada. Of course, they are also locked in combat against the American capitalist class, against the imperialist holdings of Americans, British and whatever other imperialist holdings there are in Canada - mostly American. But the workers are organized along class lines in the country, and they're fighting for state power, are they not? (*Through*) the N.D.P.

They're fighting against their own bourgeoisie. Who are the bourgeoisie in this country? (...) You can name them - they're in Porter's book (*The Vertical Mosaic-ed.*) - he tells you who they all are, what interests and holdings they all have. (*Even*) where they live, and everything. Well, maybe the FLQ (*Front de Libération du Québec*) are interested in that - not us particularly (...) We know what it means in classic Marxism, therefore we reject the designation that Canada's a colony, we say Canada's an "imperialized imperialist State." (...)

Not for Canadian unions on principle

Well, on the union question (...) of course the Canadian capitalist class oppose the Canada-US union connection. They would like us to be weaker. They'd like the Canadian workers to be weak, and I think you'd have to say that the US-Canadian connection of the workers in this country has been a powerful factor in their strength. For instance in the Inco strike I saw some figures. One of the Canadian national unions gave us some data on how Canadian unions are being bled by the American central offices. Well of course many of the unions' dues are sent and are controlled by American head offices (*which may withhold*) strike benefits, which is a violation of the autonomous rights of Canadian workers. But the Steelworkers published some data on how much money went into the Inco strike a couple of years ago - it was incredible. They had a war chest that was equal to the Inco's (*worth*) itself. The amount of capital the Steelworkers' union had at its disposal was almost equal to the capital of Inco. That's good, isn't it? I thought that was very good. You

know you have to have money to fight them. Strikes aren't won on just militancy, you know, dogged determination of workers. (... *without*) the funds to let them stay out. (...)

(...) Our general view would be, not for separate Canadian unions, or for fracturing the already international unions (...) neither do we advocate Canadian unions joining US unions by forming some kind of parallel unions (*to those*) in the United States - we support the Canadian national unions - but not for fracturing those unions that are already structured on international lines. We are for the ranks' struggle within their unions against the union bureaucrats, and one of the most powerful arguments to win support among the workers in those shops under those bureaucrats is to fight for autonomy - elementary democracy in the unions. I think we'd get the support of the American workers too. They're not going to sit idly by (*saying*) "it doesn't matter about the workers in Canada (*who want*) to hold strike votes, etc. We'd get substantial support among American workers. The big thing is to internationalize labor (...) in a real sense. Canada's CUPE (*Canada largest union, mostly public sector workers*) should be part of the international labor movement. That's the big contradiction. In our time you have the internationalization of capital as never before (...) but there are no substantial moves by unions to move in this international direction.

We talk about the Fourth International (*to which we are organizationally tied*) (...) which to revolutionaries is vital (...) It's also necessary for the organized labor movement, the unions, to be part of an international because so many companies are now internationalized, and they can adjust their operations, and they are doing it, you know - this is one of the problems. I didn't develop a "transitional program" for the national struggle of the Canadian workers - we've put it forward in our papers many times and one of the things happening now is that American capital, (*being*) under competitive pressure from Japanese and German goods, are now going to start phasing out Canadian operations. They will continue to operate the most useful plants. For a plant that can't be integrated into the market efficiently, they're going to phase them out - this is already happening (*this talk pre-dates NAFTA by a couple of decades - ed.*) A great number of branch plants in this country are going to be phased out by American corporations. Well of course we would call for their nationalization, and to be put under workers' control.

Well, there are other questions but I've spoken now for another fifteen minutes, so I think we should leave the other questions - we've got discussions after.
(*end of tape*)

Further reading: documents by Ross Dowson and the United Tendency are available from the Ross Dowson archives at National Archives, Ottawa and at Trent University, Peterborough ON. Info: www.rossdowson.com

Some related LSA/LSO Discussion Bulletins by Ross Dowson, 1972

"A Step Backward Instead of Forward" by Ross Dowson with an Appendix: Kent-Marlon Statement on "Draft Resolution on Canada and the Crisis of World Imperialism"
DB Number 18, November 1972

"The Key Issue at Dispute in Canada-U.S. Relations, Part I, by Ross Dowson
DB Number 25, January 1973

"The Chartered Banks and their role in Canada-U.S. Relations" by Ross Dowson
DB Number 30, February 1973

"The Key issue at Dispute in Canada-U.S. Relations, Part II" by Ross Dowson, and
"Declaration by the United Tendency" March 16, 1973
DB Number 35, March 20, 1973